5: Bourne T-5 (1849) 1874
SH5 Tehuelche SH5

should little think of as an object of adoration — the tobacco-pipe; — though, how far this is, in fact, an object of idolatry in Christian lands, it might not become me to speculate. The only occasions on which the Indians discovered any appearance of devotion were those of smoking. This may have been only a symptom of intoxication, but the reader may judge for himself.

A group of a dozen or more assemble, — sometimes in a wigwam, sometimes in the open air. A vessel made of a piece of hide bent into a saucer-shape while green and afterwards hardened, or sometimes an ox-horn, filled with water, is set on the ground. A stone pipe is filled with the scrapings of a wood resembling yellow ebony, mixed with finely-cut tobacco. The company then lay themselves in a circle flat on their faces, their mantles drawn up to the tops of their heads. The pipe is lighted. One takes it into his mouth and inhales as much smoke as he can swallow; the others take it in succession, till all have become satisfied. By the time the second smoker is fully charged, the first begins a series of groanings and gruntings, with a slight trembling of the head, the smoke slowly oozing out at the nostrils. The groaning soon becomes general, and waxes louder, till it swells into a hideous bowling, enough to frighten man or beast. The noise gradually dies away. They remain a short time in profound silence, and each imbibes a draught of water. Then succeeds another interval of silence, observed with the most profound and devotional gravity. All at length arise, and slowly disperse. Now, this may or may not have been a form of worship; but the circumstances attending it, the numbers uniformly engaged in it, the formality with which it was invariably conducted

5: Bourne T-5 (1849)1874
SH5 Tehuelche SH5

the solemnity of visage, the reverential grimace, the prostration, the silence, the trembling, — these, and traits of expression which are more easily discerned and remembered than described, gave me a decided impression that the whole had a superstitious meaning. The natural operation of the tobacco, and of the substance mixed with it, might explain part of the symptoms,— the writhing and groaning, — but these appeared to be a good deal in excess, and there were other features of the case which appeared to require another solution.

I never asked any explanation. The mystery which savage tribes are so apt to throw around their religious rites, and their resentment at any unhallowed curiosity, I was not inclined to meddle with or provoke. If my conjectures were just as to the nature of this ceremony, inquiry might lead to unpleasant consequences. Ignorance appeared, on the whole, safer than knowledge of good or evil, gained at the risk of being caught trespassing on things forbidden. If any one thinks my precaution excessive, he is at liberty to take a different course whenever he finds himself in the jurisdiction of Parosilver, or any other Patagonian chief.

The inquiry may arise, especially in the mind of the religious reader, whether I attempted to impart to my captors any knowledge of God, his attributes and laws. The answer is quite ready, — No, and for a variety of reasons. The writer did not understand enough of either Spanish or Indian to communicate intelligible ideas on any matters beyond the range of the senses, and Patagonia is pretty barren of sensible phenomena, which made my stock of words more limited than it might have been under more favorable circumstances. There was no finding "tongues